

## **"The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly... ...Handling All Kinds of Participants!"**

**Time:** 1 - 1.5 hrs

**Materials:** Role sheets for each of the participants

### **Preparation:**

Write role sheets for each of the participants. Since you will put people in small groups, remember that each person in the group needs a different role sheet. In each round, one of the group members will be the facilitator, one will be the problem participant, and the others will just be themselves participating in the discussion. In order to write the role sheets, choose five problem behaviors that you would like the facilitators to address during the rounds. Choose five topics for discussion that are relevant to your group.

### **Steps:**

5 min.

#### **1. Introduction.**

- ▶ Ask people to tell you what role a facilitator plays in a participatory activity. What happens when there are "problem participants?"
- ▶ Break people up into small groups of 4 - 5. Have each person in the group count off 1 - 5. Each person gets a role sheet (based on the # they call out, ie. #1 gets sheet for Participant #1). Tell them they shouldn't share/compare role sheets yet.

5 min.

#### **2. Instructions.**

- ▶ We've probably all had what we consider "problem or challenging participants" in our courses. In this activity, we will be able to practice handling some of these problem participants and discuss strategies for dealing with different problems.
- ▶ Each person has received a role sheet. There are five rounds (based on having 5 people in each small group). In each round, they will play a different role. In each round, there will be a facilitator and a "problem participant" and the other group members will play themselves. The problem participant should not announce who he/she is, but rather just play their role and see how the group dynamic unfolds.

- ▶ They will do this for five rounds. After each round, we will talk briefly about how the facilitators handled the discussion.
- ▶ Ask them to look at their role sheets, and identify the facilitators for the first round (show of hands). They have five minutes for this round.

**40 - 50 min. 3. Small group activity.**

▶ Each round goes for five minutes. After a round is over, the trainer leads a brief discussion of what happened, and writes key points on flipchart:

- What was the problem? What behavior did the problem participants act out? Why do some people act like this?
- How did this affect the group?
- What did the facilitators do to handle this?
- What else could the facilitators do? Other suggestions?

▶ Continue with round 2, stop groups after 5 min., debrief after each round, and so forth.

**10 min. 4. Summary.**

▶ Review different types of problem participants that may show up in classes. Highlight how there may be different strategies for dealing with different problems, from list that was created from group debriefings.

▶ Ask if this is similar to their experience? How is it different? Other types of problem participants emerge? How do they handle these?

▶ Add any other ways to handle difficult participants, or ask people to elaborate on some of the points they raised earlier.

**Sample Rounds:**

**Round 1:** Facilitator leads discussion on: Should all trainers be required to write detailed lesson plans? Why or why not?

Problem behavior: Side-talking--you are excited about the training and also have a lot to say on the topic being discussed. You are so involved that you cannot contain your ideas and constantly find yourself talking to your neighbor about them.

(Facilitator: person #3, Problem: person #4)

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**Participant # 1**

Round 1: You will participate in the discussion as yourself.

Round 2: You will participate in the discussion as yourself.

Round 3: You will be the facilitator. You will lead a discussion on the following topic:

This is the first meeting of the Office Holiday Party Committee. Different people have been assigned to this Committee, so the whole office is represented. Plan away!

Round 4: You will participate in the discussion as yourself.

Round 5: You will be the "problem participant." Your role:

**ONLY WANT TO HEAR THE EXPERT:** You only want to hear what the trainer has to say. You're glad to be part of this training, and you think you've come to hear an expert share their information. You aren't too interested in what your fellow participants have to say, since they probably know as much as you do. You want to learn more.

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**Participant # 2**

Round 1: You will participate in the discussion as yourself.

Round 2: You will be the "problem participant." Your role:

**SEMI-CONFRONTATIONAL:** You have been working in the field for over 20 years, and you think the union/health and safety committee/management aren't doing anything to protect workers. Nothing happens in the workplace to make it safer.

Round 3: You will participate in the discussion as yourself.

Round 4: You will participate in the discussion as yourself.

Round 5: You will be the facilitator. You will lead a discussion on the following topic:

**What are the most effective ways to teach adult students? What's worked the best? Why?**

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**Participant # 3**

Round 1: You will be the facilitator. You will lead a discussion on the following topic:

Should all trainers be required to write detailed lesson plans? Why or why not?

Round 2: You will participate in the discussion as yourself.

Round 3: You will participate in the discussion as yourself.

Round 4: You will be the "problem participant." Your role:

GIVES INCORRECT INFORMATION. You are very eager to be part of this training, and are very confident in your knowledge. Several times during the discussion, however, you inadvertently give information that is clearly not correct.

Round 5: You will participate in the discussion as yourself.

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**Participant # 4**

Round 1: You will be the "problem participant." Your role:

SIDE-TALKING. You are excited about the training and also have a lot to say on the topic being discussed. You are so involved you cannot contain your ideas and constantly find yourself talking to your neighbor about them.

Round 2: You will participate in the discussion as yourself.

Round 3: You will participate in the discussion as yourself.

Round 4: You will be the facilitator. You will lead a discussion on the following topic:

What do we need to keep in mind to truly be protected by respirators? What forms part of a good respiratory protection program?

Round 5: You will participate in the discussion as yourself.

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**Participant # 5**

Round 1: You will participate in the discussion as yourself.

Round 2: You will be the facilitator. You will lead a discussion on the following topic:

Why is it better to work as a group to resolve health and safety problems in the workplace?

Round 3: You will be the "problem participant." Your role:

REMOVED. You are here because you **have to be** and not because you want to be. You sit a bit removed from the rest of the group, and don't really want to have much to do with the discussion.

Round 4: You will participate in the discussion as yourself.

Round 5: You will participate in the discussion as yourself.